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## Twins on a mission to raise staggering £100,000 for the British Heart Foundation

**Northumbria University alumnus Jonathan Stretton-Downes and his twin brother David are aiming to raise £100,000 with the 'SIX TIMES OPEN' campaign, inspired by Jonathan's sixth heart surgery in Newcastle's Freeman Hospital in early 2017.**

The main aim of the 12-month campaign is to raise awareness and funds for the British Heart Foundation's research of cardiovascular disease (CVD) – UK's single biggest killer. The SIX TIMES OPEN Campaign launched on Friday 18th

November at the National Gallery in London, numerous events and activities are planned to take place throughout the calendar year, both around the UK and internationally with support from many partners such as the NHS, British Airways and Ross Edgley.

Brothers, Jonathan and David are passionate about encouraging people to be as positive as they can be about living with heart disease, stating that “events such as this don’t have to define who you are or dictate your life”.

Jonathan explained: “I was born with aortic stenosis, a congenital heart defect and underwent my first operation at 10 days old to correct this. The following four operations all stemmed from this condition and operation. My last operation was in 2004 where I had a mechanical aortic valve fitted into the left side of my heart. “

However, the 28-year-old has always shown motivation to succeed: “I have never let any of this hold me back and I live a very full and rounded life. I love sport and being active and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2016, I completed the Newcastle Stampede, a 10K obstacle run in support of the British Heart Foundation.” During his time at Northumbria Jonathan was also actively involved in sports, playing as part of the ice hockey team. He graduated in 2010 with a degree in Biomedical Science.

He added: “My time at Northumbria allowed me to develop specific skills which have helped me greatly since graduating; a can-do, will-do attitude towards life and a passion for innovative strategy and creative problem solving.

“Newcastle is a brilliant city and being at Northumbria was a great platform to meet new people, learn new skills and I have made lifelong friends because of my time here.”

Both Jonathan and David will be documented during the surgery and along the harsh road to recovery, exposing the rollercoaster of emotions and physical struggles with the outcome of producing a 60-minute documentary, as well as a book titled ‘How to survive heart surgery’ authored by Jonathan.

British Heart Foundation (BHF), founded in 1961, is the nation’s heart charity and the largest independent funder of cardiovascular research. Heart disease

causes 26 percent of all deaths in UK, an average of 435 deaths per day or one death every three minutes. Since the establishment of BHF annual number of deaths from CVD in UK has fallen by half.

To find out more about the campaign visit <http://www.sixtimesopen.com> or if you wish to donate <https://celebration.bhf.org.uk/Celebration/SIX-TIMES-OPEN>.

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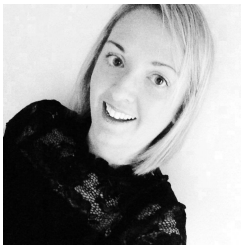
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